

PENTECOSTAL-CHARISMATIC STUDIES: INTERDISCIPLINARY DIRECTIONS

LINDA M. AMBROSE &
PAMELA M.S. HOLMES

In the parable of “The Blind Men and the Elephant” a wise teacher introduced several of his students to a large and mysterious creature that they had heard about but never encountered. Depending on their approach to the animal, each one came away with different impressions based on what they perceived. That simple story can serve many purposes, but surely one lesson that we take away is the value of multiple approaches when considering complex questions. At the *Canadian Journal of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity* we are convinced that a variety of disciplinary approaches serve us best in our continuing efforts to explore the many facets of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity. In making our debut as editors of this sixth volume of *CJPC*, we remain committed to continue on the path of interdisciplinarity established by the journal’s founding editors, Michael Wilkinson and Peter Althouse.

As a tribute to the previous editors and a reminder about the important role that Canadian initiatives continue to play in global Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity, this issue opens with a series of review essays that critically engage with Michael Wilkinson and Peter Althouse’s important book *Catch the Fire: Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal* (Northern Illinois University Press, 2014). In the mid-1990s, Toronto was the site of a significant charismatic renewal that spread around the globe and came to be known as the “Toronto Blessing.” Twenty years later, the movement led by John and Carol Arnott, had changed its name to “Catch the Fire,” and it was still attracting thousands of people to mass meetings around the world where a particular spiritual practice known as “soaking prayer” was taught. In this book, funded by a John Templeton Foundation Research grant on Prayer and the Charismatic Movement, the authors explore this Canadian-born phenomenon using fieldwork that included months of research and domestic and international travel. At the March 2015 meeting of the

Canadian Pentecostal Research Network at Southeastern University in Lakeland, Florida, four critics reviewed the book in a lively exchange with the authors. We are pleased that all four of those scholars agreed to publish their comments here: Dale M. Coulter, Associate Dean of Academics and Associate Professor of Historical Theology at Regent University, came to the discussion with his interest in medieval mysticism; Velmarie Albertini, an independent scholar, focused her remarks on the authors' engagement with social science theorists; Van Johnson, Dean of Master's Pentecostal Seminary and Professor of New Testament, considered what the study demonstrates about the intersection of theology and culture; and Jennifer A. Miskov, historian and biographer of Carrie Judd Montgomery, reflected on her personal ministry experience in the soaking prayer movement. With these scholars offering their impressions of *Catch the Fire*, we find four different, but complementary perspectives. Wilkinson, a sociologist, and Althouse, a theologian, then respond to their critics with an emphasis on the challenges of interdisciplinary collaboration, and how their project led to a richer understanding of the practice of soaking prayer.

This volume also features two papers that further demonstrate the contributions that interdisciplinary approaches bring to Pentecostal studies. E. Janet Warren's paper "When Pneumatology meets Demonology: Options for Reconciling Divine Omnipresence and Divine Absence," uses theology, philosophy and biblical studies to examine a classic theological conundrum about the presence of evil in the world where Pentecostal-Charismatics insist that God is omnipresent through the Holy Spirit. Warren suggests a model based on the cultic concept of graded holiness as a way to conceptualize divine presence and divine absence. Joseph Quayesi-Amakye's paper "Prophetic Practices in Contemporary Pentecostalism in Ghana" takes a discursive and analytical approach to explore some current Ghanaian prophetic practices and rituals. The paper serves to remind us that the Canadian Pentecostal-Charismatic movement is part of a global phenomenon and while practices vary from one context to another, this paper provides a cautionary tale. Ghanaian leaders sometimes seek to mediate divine help by insisting that their authority should not be questioned, even as they exploit believers' fears. The author concludes with the caution that such intimidation tactics, while culturally specific, might not be so different from what he calls "the antics of prosperity preachers" in other settings.

We introduce something new with this volume called “Notes from the Archives.” We plan to make this a regular feature, designed to introduce readers to archival research facilities of interest to Canadian Pentecostal-Charismatic studies. James D. Craig, Archivist for the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada Archives in Mississauga, Ontario, is our first contributor to the series. In “If you build it, they will come: The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada Archives,” Jim gives his personal reflection on the experience of helping to establish, and now manage, this denominational facility. In true Pentecostal style, Jim wrote his piece as a highly personal story, almost as a testimony. We hope that our readers will see in this not only the backstory to an important Canadian research facility and some suggestions about research that is waiting to be tackled, but as something more. Recent scholarship on archival studies has drawn attention to the ways in which archives are themselves socially constructed, based on decisions about what is important to know and to preserve. Funding constraints sometimes enter into this, but that is certainly not the only factor. Whether intentional or not, policies and decisions are constantly being made that determine how well particular themes and periods are represented in repositories. As Antoinette Burton has argued, scholars are constantly “engaging with the limits and possibilities of the archive as a site of knowledge production, an arbiter of truth, and a mechanism for shaping the narratives of history” (*Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History*, Duke University Press, 2005, p. 2). Of course historians of Pentecostalism are not the only ones who rely on archival sources, and in the spirit of interdisciplinarity, we hope that readers from various backgrounds will enjoy this new feature in the journal and imagine new ways that archival collections, such as the PAOC facility featured here, might inform their own scholarship.

We are very pleased to announce that Martin Mittelstadt, Professor of New Testament at Evangel University, has agreed to continue serving in the important role of Book Review Editor for *CJPC*. Once again Marty has worked tirelessly to recruit and coordinate reviewers from a variety of disciplines and institutions to give their insights into eight new books pertaining to Pentecostal-Charismatic studies.

We hope that you enjoy this volume and we want to remind our readers that as editors, we are always looking for papers and reviewers. If you have not already done so, please visit our website <https://journal.twu.ca/index.php/CJPC/index> and register (at no cost) as a subscriber, and potential author/reviewer. We look forward to seeing many of our readers, reviewers, and contributors at the Canadian Pentecostal Research Network Symposium in San Dimas, California in March 2016. That meeting, part of the 45th Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, has particular relevance for Canadians given that it will be held at Life Pacific College, associated with the Four-square Church, founded by none other than Aimee Semple McPherson.